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AUTHOR Morse, Roberta
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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the literature pertaining to the life situation of black female professionals, presents the results of a research project which investigated the attitudes of some black female professionals on various issues such as the feminist movement and balancing a career and family, and offers a discussion and summary of the data and implications for future research. The study group was a convenience sample of 12 black women professionals from Hampton, Virginia, most of whom were faculty members at Hampton Institute. An open-ended questionnaire focusing on racism, sexism, career experiencés, personal and familial relationships, and sociopolitical views was administered to the group in an interview format. Each question is discussed in the report and followed by brief outlines of the responses, in some cases including quotations from respondents. In summarizing the responses, the report breaks the questions down into four categories. On the issue of racism and sexism there was a unanimous feeling that stereotypes prevailed for both black men and women, that career ascent was impeded by these stereotypes, and that the current status of black women in their fields was low. On the issue of career growth and experience, the respondents felt that opportunities were improving, that they had experienced competition with blacks and whites, and that black organizations might be helpful. When questioned concerning their personal lives, all respondents found it difficult to balance career and family and half felt they had a positive image in the community. The group's feelings about the feminist movement and the civil rights movement were varied. A brief list of references concludes the report. (CG)

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The Black Female Professional

by
Roberta Morse

Occasional Paper No.21

Mental Health Research and Development Center
IUAIR
Institute for Urban Affairs and Research

Howard University • Washington, D.C.

THE BLACK FEMALE PROFESSIONAL

by

Roberta Morse, Ph.D.

Occasional Paper No. 21

Mental Health Research and Development Center

Institute for Urban Affairs and Research
Howard University

Washington, D.C.

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Dedicated To My

Parents,

Robert and Naomi Morse

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

> "While white women have made many gains, Black females have experienced only limited occupational mobility and have gained professional status in only several disciplines. Tension over jobs between Black males and females is increasing; the white community continues to view Black women as service workers; and the political movements by white women incorporate only marginally the needs of their Black counterparts."
>
> W. Stafford (1979)

The Afro-American woman professional occupies a paradoxical position in the American society today. She is often held in high esteem in her multi-faceted roles of worker, wife, mother, and community leader, but she is also frequently condemned by her peers, subordinates and superiors. In many cases, she is the recipient of ostracism on the one hand and beneficence on the other. In the Black family, in the world of work, and in the social whirl, she is expected to be a "superwoman" on her job, a supportive wife and mother by her family, and a leader in her community. New vistas are now opening for her in the labor market. Her roles are becoming more vast and exceedingly more demanding. However, in many instances, she is lauded neither for her professional achievements nor for her contributions to her family or her community. On the contrary, she may even be chided

for her actions in these roles. Although she may sometimes be praised and may hold a prestigious status in her community, at other times, she may be the target of hostility when she is perceived by Black males, white males, and white females as their competitor in the labor force (Noble, 1978).

"Black female professionals share certain problems with professionals in general--obtaining degrees, meeting licensing requirements, and the like. In addition, they share concerns specific to Blacks--that is, the problems of racial discrimination in hiring and professional advancements" (Leggon, 1980, p. 193). Although she is considered to be a member of the "elite" socioeconomic group, the mere fact that she is Black frequently relegates her to an inferior status as viewed by white America. This is so notwithstanding the fact that the Black woman professional has sometimes achieved near parity educationally and socioeconomically with her white female counterpart. As Noble (1978) asserts, all Blacks, regardless of their financial or social status, are perceived by whites as having an inferior status.

In the existing research literature, a bare minimum of space is devoted completely to the Black woman professional. Instead, the little written about her is almost always tucked clandestinely between the writings concerning Black women of the lower and working classes. Notable exceptions are Noble (1978) and Rodgers-Rose (1980) who discuss the Black woman professional extensively. They must be referred to often. In order to bridge the gap created by a dearth of research on the Black female

professional, various perspectives concerning the Black woman in general will be presented in this paper. It must constantly be borne in mind that the Black woman professional is in jeopardy. She experiences racial, sexual, and professional discrimination. She is often viewed as Black first, a woman second, and a professional third, being preferred as the figure of choice only as a last resort and/or primarily to fulfill equal opportunity hiring requirements. How does this affect her family and personal life, her career ambitions, her sociopolitical attitudes, and her feelings about herself?

The purpose of the present paper is to review relevant literature pertaining to the life situation of Black female professionals, as well as to present the results of a research project which investigated the attitudes of some Black female professionals on various issues such as the feminist movement and balancing a career and family. The specific objectives of the paper are as follows:

1. To delineate problems faced by the Black woman professional as a function of her race and sex.

2. To review theories as well as precipitating factors underlying some of the problems which may plague the Black woman professional.

3. To present pilot results from a small research project investigating the lives of a few Black woman professionals.

4. To examine briefly the effects or impact of some problems faced by the Black woman professional on her well-being.

An overview of the salient research on the Black woman will be presented, followed by data gleaned from the research study, a discussion and summary of the data, and the implications of the findings of this study for future research.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW -- PERSPECTIVES ON THE BLACK FEMALE PROFESSIONAL

A. Who She Is

In the present paper, receipt of a college degree and current employment in a non-clerical or non-service job will be used to define a "professional". According to the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (1980), 15.7 percent of the women in the categories of professional-technical and managerial-administrative, except farm, are Black. There are approximately 777,000 Black and other minority women professional and technical workers in America (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1980).

Noble (1978, p. 125) observed that Black women who were employed in the professional, technical, and managerial occupations were concentrated in the lower salaried positions. Noble noted:

> Nearly 50 percent of Black women in this category were teachers below the college and university level, and nearly 25 percent were nurses. The occupations in the white-collar category held by Black men were clearly more highly paid and prestigious than those held by Black women. Only one percent of the total number of Black females in the labor force are in the category of managers and administrators.

Noble (1978, p. 121) also noted that, "... the fastest growing occupation of Black women is clerical." Thus, it is not surprising that there presently exists an underrepresentation of Black women in the professions of medicine, law, engineering, college and university administrators, and full professors.

For example, in a survey, Blackwell (1981) investigated a number of Blacks in the following fields: (1) dentistry, (2) engineering, (3) law, (4) medicine, (5) optometry, (6) pharmacy, (7) social work, and (8) veterinary medicine. Blackwell also investigated architectural education and the number of doctoral degrees awarded by race. The data were discouraging (although the statistics indicated that an increasing number of Black women were obtaining professional degrees). Blackwell found that there were 61 Black female dental graduates and that 54 percent of the Black students enrolled in optometry schools were female. Blackwell also found that 504 Black women received doctorates in 1979. This figure represented 47.8 percent of the total number of Blacks (5%) receiving doctorates that year.

As stated by Wallace (1980), despite the fact that Black women have gained much upward mobility in the occupational arena, more Black women than white women are in blue-collar and service positions. "In June 1978, the proportion of white women in white-collar occupations was almost one and one-half times as high as that of Black women (63.3 percent versus 45.5 percent)" (Wallace, 1980, p. 23). She states further that the same types of jobs held by white women are also held by educated and skilled Black women. However, poor and uneducated Black women are limited in the types of employment opportunities available to them, or are not participants in the labor force (Wallace, 1980, p. 100).

The median salaries of managers and administrators in 1969 were as follows: $8,285 (Black females), $8,335 (white females), and $9,843 (Black males). These facts revealing how Black women fare in the labor market frequently lead to the resignation of

Black women professionals in administrative capacities. They often lack support from family and colleagues and, consequently, many Black women professionals succumb to the stresses and pressures of their jobs. On the other hand, in some disciplines which are dominated by women, such as nursing, Black women feel that they do not have to contend with competition from males due to the paucity of this population in their fields.

The predominantly white college campus is a great source of stress for Black women professionals. Mosley (1982) states that Black female administrators on white campuses must "...perform better," but have fewer human and financial resources and receive less pay than do their white male or white female counterparts. They must also be a "nigger expert" in addition to their prescribed duties and responsibilities. They must know all there is about Blacks. Moreover, according to Mosley (1982, p. 24), "neither Black men nor Black women occupy positions of authority to affect the policy and decisions in higher education."

Black males and Black females face numerous problems in interaction with each other. Conflicting views regarding this issue exist in the literature. As stated by Hood (1978), sexism often separates Black women from their Black male counterparts. The Black female also must battle with the white female who, through the struggle against sexism, is seeking rectification for her feelings of discrimination along sexual lines. Two schools of thought pertaining to this issue prevail. One viewpoint is that the Black woman is a threat professionally to the Black male and to the white female. Proponents of this view adhere to the position that the Black woman's road to success is easier than is

that of either the Black male or the white female. It is believed by these two groups (that is, Black males and white females) that the Black female satisfies the oppression of two groups which have traditionally been victims of discrimination, namely, Blacks and females. In contrast, another position maintains the view that the Black woman is a victim of double oppression, being the victim of both racism and sexism.

Theorists recognize the need for the Black woman to work in our American society. Based on findings from a national longitudinal survey, Wallace (1980) stated that Black women had more pressures which make their entering the labor force a necessity. Having unemployed husbands who worked only part-time during the year was a phenomenon which was evident among Black wives. Exclusive of the Black women's earnings, the total annual income for the households which were surveyed was under $3,000. Wallace (1980, p. 56) further maintains that, "employment discrimination against Black women is composed of generous doses of sex discrimination (experienced by all women) and lingering amounts of racial discrimination."

Therefore, the Black woman's image may be misunderstood and misinterpreted. As maintained by Dill (1979), the recent image of this female as one who is potentially autonomous, independent, and capable is a consequence of the shortage of Black adult males in America at the present time. The Black woman, in order to survive professionally in our society, must believe that she is as competitive and as independent as are her Black male, white female, and white male rivals. Often, the Black female in a leadership position is placed in the role of a "superwoman." Two

roles which she often plays are those of caretaker as well as problem-solver for her fellow employees (Dumas, 1980). Thompson (1979) proposes that this position of the Black woman (that is, "superwoman") exists as a result of the closeness of the mother-child relationship as well as the socialization process.

Dumas (1980, p. 212), contends that: "The Black woman executive--perceived to be either good or bad--becomes a kind of superstar among some individuals or groups in the organization. People love her when she gives what is desired and hate her when she fails to perform as expected." Mosley (1982, p. 21), offers the view that "Black women, where they are represented, are most often in positions peripheral to the policy and decision-making core of higher education. They feel overworked, underpaid, alienated, isolated, uncertain and powerless. Finally, and most discouraging they had nonsupport, desertion, and isolation from Black males."

Consequently, prior to examining some of the obstacles against which Black female professionals have struggled, an historical glance at their life situation must be taken. Historically, Black women have been limited in their career choices. Factors such as "...racial isolation and oppression, exclusionary policies of higher education, economic deprivation, and discouragement were severe obstacles which impeded the career planning of Black women. The number and type of professional role models were limited by these environmental factors. The segregated south appeared to have a greater number of visible role models than did other Black communities outside its boundaries. ...Prior to the fifties, Black college students focused almost

exclusively on teaching and social service as career choices" (Blackwell, 1981, p. 25). However, the Black awareness movement paved the way for both Black males and females to enter more diversified fields of concentration. Although a larger number of Blacks have entered such fields as law, medicine, engineering, and so forth, economic barriers hindering greater numbers of Blacks from obtaining post-secondary degrees still remain. These barriers include the following: (1) high rates of unemployment, (2) inadequate income to support students in higher education programs, (3) low occupational status, (4) limited access to scholarships and fellowships, and (5) fear of excessive indebtedness resulting from loan programs (Blackwell, 1981).

Despite these barriers, many Black families have encouraged Black female children to seek higher educational opportunities. As a method of acquiring professional status and movement up the success ladder, education dates back to the "farmer's daughter effect" (Bock, 1969). Leggon notes: ...Like farm families, Black families choose to spend their limited resources to educate daughters rather than sons because, since girls tend to do better than boys in school, they had a better chance of going on for further training, which improved their chances of getting good jobs and/or marrying well when they migrate to urban areas. In addition, given the limited financial resources of the family, the male childen are often pressured to contribute to the family resources, which usually leads to their dropping out of school (Leggon, 1980, p. 193). Another explanation is that females are more likely than males to receive an education financed by their

families in an attempt to keep them from becoming domestics, a situation which in the past placed them in a position of sexual vulnerability.

B. The Black Woman and Her Family

In discussing the Black woman in America, the analysis would be incomplete without briefly mentioning slavery as it relates to the Black family. Formal marital ceremonies were rare during slavery. Noble (1978, p. 39) asserts that, "For most of those who wanted to live together there was merely a sham ritual called jump over the broom... Separation of family members was the greatest punishment and posed the greatest threat as perceived by Black slaves." Noble (1978) states further that an "egalitarian family structure" existed during slavery in that the Black male and Black female slaves "pooled the meager resources" which they had as had been their custom in Africa prior to their enslavement in white America. In order that their slaves should work harder, some slavemasters provided housing for their slaves. This made maintaining a family alone somewhat easier for the Black female slave whose entire family lived in the same quarters.

The Black female slave assumed a "dual role of worker and mother," sometimes serving as mother for her own offspring as well as for the children of her slavemaster. She faced much oppression by white America. Often, she was raped by the slavemaster and was forced to bear his children. The Black male slave's position was such that he was not allowed to protect her or his children. In many instances, he was sold away from his family. This act forced the female slave to maintain her family alone. Hence, the myth of

the Black matriarchy in America could be said to have originated from this practice of the forced separation of slave families. White Americans labelled her "super slave woman"--a matriarch who arose as a consequence of her enormous strength and independence which she was forced to exert to save her family and community. An outcome of this behavior was a lessening of male/female sex-typed roles in the Black family. Both female and male slaves acted as the provider and nurturer. This interchange of traditional male/female roles laid the foundation for the present emphasis on androgynous roles in the Black family, meaning a sharing in the decision-making as well as responsibility for household tasks and providing for the family. Thus, the egalitarian marriage emerged among Black Americans.

C. Sex Roles in the Black Family

Wallace (1980, p. 101) maintains that "well-educated Black women have learned how to balance the demands of the work environment, where they experience racial and sex discrimination, and the demands of their home." In some instances, the life styles of these women may serve as models for emulation by their working and lower class Black sisters.

Much has been written regarding the employment and family roles played by Black women in general. Andrisani and Shapiro (1978) state that the Black woman may experience a conflict between her duties at home and those on the job. According to these authors, "the greatest conflict in this regard appeared to result from an unfavorable attitude of the woman's husband toward her working; indeed more so than by the presence of young children

or by her own attitude toward the propriety of women working." Staples (1973) contends that Black males frequently desire to have a working but submissive wife. He further states that many Black women who are employed demand to have a "voice" in family affairs. Often, marital problems may result from this conflict in role expectations.

This conflict between the Black woman's role in the family as wife and/or mother and that in the labor market dates back to the combined roles of worker and mother which were thrust on the Black female slave (Staples, 1973). Since the Black woman failed to adhere to the "dainty, pedestal-sitting, subordinate" image of the white woman as she was perceived to be by white American society, the Black woman came to be perceived as a woman of "super" strength, a domineering, castrating Amazon who suppressed the Black male, who also may have been brainwashed to believe this theory. In some cases, the "divide and conquer strategy" was promoted by a system of racism and capitalism.

Despite the necessity of the Black female slave's maintaining her family alone in many cases, the Black woman survived and so did the Black family. As a consequence of the forced separation of members of slave families, one would have expected the demise of the Black family and/or its instability. However, "Black family stability should not be measured by the presence or absence of a male head, but rather by the extent to which the family meets its functional obligations. And Black female-headed families have acquitted themselves well despite occupying the lowest rungs of the employment and income ladders" (Staples, 1973, p. 32). A one-parent family headed by a female in many instances is far more

stable than is a two-parent family in which, for example, the father is unemployed or in which the couple experiences severe marital discord. This family style--the one-parent family--may be viewed as a legitimate family structure. As maintained by Staples (1973, p. 10), "the fact that the dominant society does not provide any protection for the Black woman's virtue has left her vulnerable to the sexist advances of many men."

This pattern relates back to slavery. According to McCray (1980) no clear-cut distinction between male/female roles has existed in the Black family. Rather, there has been an interchanging of roles in the Black family since the time of slavery. Since the Black male in particular has been plagued by unemployment and underemployment, the Black woman in many instances has been forced into the provider role in addition to her traditional role as wife and mother. According to Leggon (1980), some of the more elderly respondents in her survey resented their decisions to allow marriage to take precedence over their careers, whereas the younger respondents tended to maintain less traditional positions in that they felt that their marital and motherhood roles were less binding.

When examining the Black family, the analysis would be incomplete without reflecting on the role played by the Black male. Perceptions of Black manhood have varied. As stated by Wallace (1979, p. 17), "In fact what most people see when they look at the Black man is the myth." Such male stereotypes as "Toms, Coons, and Bucks" were initiated and have been perpetuated--by the media. Such stereotypes resulted in the production of the "Shaft and Superfly" type of Black movies of the

seventies. Also, through the male slave's Americanization process, "he accepted as appropriate the white man's emphasis on his sexuality" (Wallace, 1979, p. 25). His virility was assumed to be the foundation of his manhood. This writer maintains that the mere fact that the Black male was denied access to the white woman was viewed as a significant limitation of his manhood during slavery. In reality, since slavery, the Black male has not been allowed to exert his manhood either economically or educationally. He has not been allowed to protect his family physically or to stabilize it socioeconomically. The white male has been the "holder of the power" in both these spheres (that is, financially and educationally).

Staples (1973, p. 33) further states that some Black males, like many white Americans, have also come to believe that a Black matriarchy actually exists and that, "in order for the Black man to be strong, the Black woman must be weak." Therefore, some Black liberation groups support the position that the Black woman must be subjugated to a submissive role in order to achieve civil rights for the entire Black race.

This concept of Black manhood is related to the role conflict often experienced by some Black women. According to Noble (1978), the average Black woman today is not opposed to sharing the provider role, but she also desires that her mate provide some emotional support in the home.

The origin of the Black male's conception of masculinity is related to the racism which has existed in white America since slavery. According to Staples (1973), during slavery the Black male was unable to enjoy the role of fatherhood. Being suppressed

by his slavemaster, he was denied the role of providing economic support as well as physical protection for his family. Staples (1973) further postulates that, if greater employment opportunities are afforded the Black male, then he still will not be as powerful as is the white male who, in economic terms, remains at the zenith of the success ladder. As stated by Staples (1973), unless there is a resolution of what role is to be played by each, the alienation of Black men and Black women will continue and will result in a severe strain on the Black family.

Adjustments in traditional sex roles appear to be a necessity for the survival of the Black family. It is imperative that Black males assist in such responsibilities in the home as child-rearing and other domestic acts. Previously, in most instances, the Black woman interchanged roles--that is, provider, wife, and mother--in the home and in the job market. In effect, the "dual role" concept must be extended to the Black male. In some families, this concept is already in existence. There should be no domination, by either spouse but instead there should exist an egalitarian arrangement whereby there is a sharing of decision-making and tasks (Hill, 1972).

D. Support Networks in the Black Family

Curran (1978), in her study of Black and white women aged 60 years or older, found that Black women utilized formal and informal support networks (for example, family and friends, as well as community and institutional support systems) to a greater degree than did white women. Similarly, Longfellow, et al. (1979) found that, although interaction with other persons is not related

to better mental health, emotional support and assistance with various tasks seem to buffer women against the experience of stress and depression. (The subjects of that study included Black and white women who lived with their husbands or boyfriends). Also, the particular type of Black family constellation may offer much support to the Black woman. According to Hill (1972), the extended family--which consists of the nuclear family in addition to other family members such as grandparents, uncles, and aunts--as well as the augmented family which includes the nuclear family plus other non-relatives residing in the home--both provide support systems for the Black woman. Hill (1972) refers to these types of Black families as a source of strength in the Black community.

E. Sociopolitcal Factors in the Black Female's Life

Other essential areas which must be addressed as they relate to the uniqueness of the Black woman, in general, are those of leadership and community involvement. The concept of power appears to be paramount in this analysis. As was stated earlier, the Black male's feelings of being powerless originated from his role during slavery. At that time, he was unable to protect his family from physical and emotional harm or to provide his family with financial support. Consequently, the Black woman was perceived by white America as maintaining a posture of possessing more power than did her Black male cohort. However, only through her leadership roles in her community and other activities has she in actuality attempted to gain some power against the forces of sexism and racism--power which has been denied the Black man.

Often through a joining together of Black women in their women's organizations, great strides have been made in all aspects of Black American life. Through the government and community, new heights for Blacks on the whole have been reached with the assistance of the Black woman. According to Noble (1978, p. 125), "The number of Black women holding public office has doubled since 1969 from 131 to 337." Black females such as former Congresswomen Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan and Yvonne Braithwaite-Burke, and Patricia Roberts Harris, former Secretary of the Departments of Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development, have pioneered in the political arena. On the local level, other Black women such as the late Fannie Lou Hamer and Rosa Parks have also led the fight against racism. However, there is still a need for continued struggle in order for Blacks to attain power.

Previously, membership in such organizations as sororities and social clubs has served as a foundation for the development of leadership skills for many Black women professionals (for example, Barbara Jordan and Patricia Roberts Harris were active members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority before rising to national leadership positions) (Noble, 1978). In addition, many women's organizations--such as sororities, the National Council of Negro Women, the Girl Friends, the Links, and the Moles--have attempted to assist in the eradication of poverty discrimination suffered by Blacks generally. As stated by Noble (1978, p. 132), "While the pioneering leaders of Black women's clubs were in the top financial and educational strata, their prime motivating force was social betterment through recognition and destruction of racial and social inequities suffered by all Blacks."

However, despite providing a collective power base, various women's organizations have found it extremely difficulty to effect great institutional changes. Problems within these organizations themselves have, to a large degree, been an impediment to change, hence reducing their effectiveness and power. As stated by Noble (1978, p. 308), there is a need "..to organize with white women's organizations on specific issues, local, state and national, so that a more just and humane society eventuates t t attracts Black women to joint efforts with white women." The writer of the present paper concurs, but also deviates slightly from this view. The author proposes that Black female organizations are necessary and should meet separately prior to joining white women's groups in order to gain cohesiveness to prepare and to institute agendas which may not be addressed by white females.

During slavery, the civil rights movement, and currently during the feminist movement, Black women have been extremely active. Black women played significant roles in the abolitionist movement during slavery. As stated by Prestage (1980, p. 238), slavery was marked by various political activities in which Black female slaves were leaders. These women displayed a leadership ability within their slave community. Some of them also spearheaded the abolitionist movement (for example, Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman). Many Black female slaves also served in various roles with military units. During the Reconstruction period, while Black women like white women were denied the right to vote, Black men not only were enfranchised, but also held many political offices.

Black male involvement in the civil rights movement was frequently noted. However, Black women also assisted in the struggle for equality. Although the Black woman's role in the civil rights struggle was frequently viewed as meager, some Black women such as Rosa Parks and Fannie Lou Hamer played prominent roles in this movement which was beneficial both to Black females and to Black males. One theory pertaining to this state of affairs is that, "...many people believed it (the civil rights movement) gave a competitive advantage to Black females in that prospective employers could get 'two minorities' for the price of one" (Leggon, 1980, p. 196). The younger women in Leggon's study (1980, p. 196), believed that, "...professional success could be viewed as dissonant with the struggle for racial equality, especially if these women are seen as being (and see themselves as being) in direct competition with Black males." Following the civil rights movement, Black women realized that they must now compete with white and Black males for employment in addition to competing with white women who are also classified as minorities (Mosley, 1982).

Black women professionals are held in high esteem by their communities. Indicative of this respect is the fact that they frequently receive awards; are asked to sit at heads of tables when attending organizational and governmental affairs; are invited to give speeches at conferences and colleges; are asked to present papers at "national and regional meetings of professional and learned societies; and are often receiving honorary doctorates" (Gilkes, 1980, p. 227).

In addition, Dumas (1980) maintains that, when in leadership roles, the Black woman has been expected to be, in essence, a superwoman who must assume the roles of caretaker and problem-solver for her subordinates, peers, and sometimes her superordinates. She further contends that, "...in Black communities as well as in predominantly white institutions, the full leadership potential of Black women in the past in addition to the present has remained untapped" (Dumas, 1980).

Finally, one of the most controversial topics today concerning the uniqueness of the Black woman is that of her role in the feminist movement. The Black woman is frequently the target of both sexism and racism. It appears, therefore, to be difficult to distinguish which type of discrimination--racial or sexual--affects the Black woman to the greatest degree. As stated by Wallace (1980, p. 100), "The interaction effects of race and sex have made it difficult to discern their focal role on Black women workers." Consequently, both racism and sexism apparently played a role in the lives of Black females in the labor market, but the extent of each of these marks of oppression cannot be delineated separately.

Various positions exist among Black women regarding their involvement in the feminist movement. As concluded by Lorde (1978), Black women should align themselves with Black men in the struggle against racism and band together with white women in the cause against sexism. This opinion implies that overcoming racism is a task for Black males and Black females and that Black females, being doubly suppressed by a racist and sexist society, should join the fight against sexism with white females. This

particular philosophy suggests that the goals and objectives of both Black women and white women are similar (for example, obtaining equal pay and equal rights, and the establishment of day-care centers for working mothers). Torrey (1979) argues that support among Black civil rights groups and women's rights groups is essential and, without this togetherness, Black women will always be denied equality.

On the contrary, Hood (1978) maintains that sexism may be a divide-and-conquer strategy in that it separates Black women from Black men. Some Black males perceive that Black females who are involved in the feminist movement are anti-male and are a threat to their manhood, both emotionally and economically. Those Black males adhering to this position are thus in opposition to the participation of Black women in the women's liberation movement. Hood (1978) further posits the view that "white women are perceived as attempting to obtain personal gains from the system" by using their sex and their color. Adherents of this position believe that the goals and objectives of Black women are different from those of white women and/or are not addressed by white women in their organizations. As a result, such Black women's organizations as the National Black Feminist Organization were formed to address issues specific to the needs of Black women (for example, poverty and racism).

Along slightly different lines, Hemmons (1980, p. 296) determined that "in fact, more Black women in this study embraced the precepts of the women's movement than white women, 47 versus 46 percent." Although the difference was not significant, this statistic suggests some support for this movement by both Black

and white women. However, due to the small sample size, generalization of the findings of that study is limited. Hemmons (1980, p. 296), further found that "Black women who were committed to the Black liberation movement were also committed to the women's liberation movement". Surprisingly, Black women were more "feminine" in their values than white women, but this did not decrease the percentage of women who showed a positive attitude toward the women's liberation movement. These results suggest that the inconsistency in Black women's opinions is related to the historically non-traditional roles that Black women in our society have maintained. The roles of Black men and women are more androgynous than are those of white men and women. Therefore, it is the position of the author of this paper that both movements to counteract racism as well as those to eradicate sexism are essential for the survival of Black people, both males and females. Pertaining to the feminist movement specifically, the writer postulates that both white and Black groups are necessary and that collaboration of these groups, after separate meetings, should be the course of action to ensure their greatest effectiveness.

F. Summary

In summary, various perspectives regarding the Black woman have been presented. Specifically, relevant research literature pertaining to the many facets of her life have been briefly discussed as a prelude to the author's study. As stated by the writer in earlier portions of this document, only a minimun of data on the Black woman professional was found in the literature.

Several facts in the life of the Black woman, in general, were tersely presented, namely: (1) who is the Black woman professional; (2) the Black family (slavery, sex-role theory, Black manhood, the support networks), and (3) sociopolitical factors in the Black female's life (leadership and community involvement and the feminist movement).

The writer posited from the theoretical formulations pertaining to the Black woman that her life is indeed paradoxical. Beginning with slavery, she was oppressed both racially and sexually, and as a result she was labeled as a matriarch by white America. She was forced into an interchanging of roles with her male cohort in the Black family. Only as a consequence of her unmitigated tenacity did she and her Black family survive. Through the support in her life--such as the extended family or augmented family--she has withstood the rigors of her "triple roles" as wife, mother, and member of the labor force. As a result of her leadership and community involvement, new vistas are opening for her, as well as for the Black man and the Black child.

Despite these negative impressions, she must continue to be the "androgynous bulwark" of the Black family as she has been previously and she must not be stereotyped as a cruel and dominating matriarch who is perceived by white Americans and the Black man as a threat to their upward mobility in society.

Positive images of her include the following: (1) she is a bulwark of the Black family, (2) she is a strong community leader, (3) she is "a woman for all seasons on the job." In contrast, some of the following are negative perceptions of her: (1) she is

a "superwoman," (2) she belongs in the home, (3) she betrays the Black male, and (4) she is a competitive force who opposes the Black male in the labor force as well as socioeconomically.

Chapter III

THE STUDY

A. Overview of Purpose and Design

In reviewing the literature on Black women professionals, it became apparent that there was limited information available on them as a distinct group, that available information provoked as many questions as were answered, and that the views and opinions which Black female professionals expressed about their personal and professional roles were conspicuously underrepresented in the empirical research. Thus, a small exploratory study was undertaken to gain insights into some of the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of a select group of Black female professionals.

By means of a structured interview format, study participants were queried on such matters as the effects of racism and sexism on their careers, the types of career growth experiences they have had, the effects their careers have had on their personal lives, and their sociopolitical views on feminism, racism, sexism, and related issues.

B. Respondents

A convenience sample of twelve (12) Black women professionals from Hampton, Virginia comprised the subject group. Women in various professional roles were sought. Through personal contacts, women in the fields of education, medicine, human ecology, music, law, counseling, business administration, speech pathology, botany, and library sciences agreed to participate in

the study. Most (9) of the subjects were faculty members at Hampton Institute, a predominately Black college. Therefore, many of these women present opinions that reflect the dual experiences of their profession of specialization, for example, medicine, law, and so forth, and their higher education teaching/administrative concerns.

Of the 12 respondents, 5 were between the ages of 30 and 39 years, 4 were between the ages of 40 and 49, and 3 were between the ages of 50 and 59. Five (5) had doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees, 3 had master's degrees, 2 had bachelor's degrees, 1 had a law degree, and 1 had a medical degree. Eight (8) were currently married, 1 was widowed, and 3 were single. Of the single women, 2 were in the younger age range, 30-39, and 1 was in the oldest age range, 50-59 years. Seven (7) of the married women had children--4 had 3 children, 2 had 2 children, and 1 had 1 child.

C. Instrument

A seventeen (17) item questionnaire that focused on various facets of the respondents' professional and personal lives was constructed. In general, the questions were concerned with racism and sexism, career experiences, personal and familial relationships, and sociopolitical views and opinions.

All questions were open-ended.

D. Data Collection Procedures

Individual structured interviews were conducted with each respondent. Each interview was about 45-60 minutes long. The interviewer, a clinical psychologist, was well trained and experienced in interviewing techniques. All interviews were taped (with respondents' knowledge and consent) to ensure accuracy and to facilitate the conversational flow.

E. Results

All respondents did not elect to answer each question; therefore, the number of respondents reported for each question is not always twelve (12). For ease of presentation, questions that were categorically related are presented together. Within each category, results are presented in summary form by individual questions. Individual responses thought to be particularly enlightening are presented also.

1. Racism and Sexism (Questions 2, 4, 9, 11, 12)

Question 2 - **"In your estimation, has your road been easier or more difficult than a Black male's road?"**

Of the twelve (12) interviewees who responded to this item, two (2) women felt that the Black female's road to success was easier than that of the Black male. Three (3) interviewees maintained that there was no difference in the degree of difficulty between the Black male's upward mobility and that of his female counterpart, while seven (7) respondents felt that their respective roads to success had been more difficult than had been those for Black males.

One (1) of the two (2) respondents who believed that the road to success was easier for the Black female in comparison to that of the Black male based her opinion on the observation that "it is easier because women are less of a threat and not held down ... (and) ... the demure role (of women) alleviates a threat." One (1) respondent who believed it was harder for Black females to succeed stated that it was "harder in male-oriented fields."

Question 4 - "What is the current status of Black women in your field? What do other women you know think about their professional status? Future directions?

Six (6) of the women interviewed felt that Black women had high status in their respective fields, while five (5) respondents felt that women in their respective fields were afforded low or mediocre status. One (1) respondent believed that women were "moving up."

One (1) respondent, a medical doctor, who believed that women in her field had high status said, "I feel Black women in medicine are well accepted, more so than white women by their male doctors. The future in medicine is wide open--physicians are very much needed. It's a good opportunity."

A respondent who believed that women did not have high status in her field of business stated that "the female isn't visible, but there is a rise now in her role. I usually receive more support from Black males than Black females. (The respondent attributed this lack of support from Black women to envy in that both are competing for the same position.) They often negate my

presence. An aggressive Black woman has a lot of potential-- (to obtain) more...management and director positions and positions that set policy."

Question 9 - "Have you ever felt held down by sexist attitudes or been treated as a sex object?"

Six (6) interviewees felt that they had been held down by sexist attitudes with one (1) stating that in her university position she was earning "... less than a male with the same credentials." Four (4) respondents believed they had never been held down by sexist attitudes.

Five (5) women said they believed they had been treated as a sex object, while four (4) stated they had not been so treated. Of the women who believed they had been treated as a sex object, one (1) stated that she handled those situations by confronting and not ignoring sexist comments.

Question 11 - "What stereotypes concerning the Black woman do you feel exist today and in what manner are they tramsmitted?"

All respondents felt that some stereotypes regarding the Black woman prevail today. Some of those enumerated included the following: a belief by Black men that Black females are suppressing and competing against him, the belief that a Black matriarchy exists, the belief that Black females are more stable than are Black males, the belief that the care of the family and, particularly, pregnancy prevention are female responsibilities, and the belief that males should make a higher salary than females.

Question 12 - "How about stereotypes about the Black male?"

All the interviewees indicated that numerous stereotypes pertaining to the Black male are prevalent. The following quotes portray, in general, the observations of the group.

> "Stereotypes about the Black male historically found their way into the homes. The sexual perception began during slavery among white females ... He's regarded as being shiftless and lazy and not wanting to pull himself up. Uncle Tom and Booker T. Washington are two images of Black men which often come to mind. The Black man has been branded about his desire for education. You can't be vocal every time you want to be. It's often believed that the Black man who has reached the top has grinned his way through."

> "Men and women in general portray them (Black men) as clowns. It's all right to have clowns, but they're all considered to be clowns. The Black man is perceived as having the greatest sex drive in the world. This idea is out of proportion. The sex drive varies from person to person among all races."

> "The Black man is viewed as lazy, weak, and one who lets the lady take care of him. He holds a feeling of being inferior. He feels rejected and unable to develop his full potential. We as women haven't been as kind as we could have been. This lack of kindness is based on the idea of the independent Black female."

2. Career Experiences or Growth (Questions 1, 3, 5, 6, 14)

Question 1 - "Tell me about some of the successes you've had in your career -- overcoming obstacles for instances."

Nine (9) respondents cited job-related success as being especially significant and two (2) respondents cited marital and familial successes as being significant. One (1) respondent highlighted professional affiliations as being an indicant of her success. Of the nine (9) who concentrated on job related successes, one (1) indicated that running her own business had been a high point of her career successes. Of the two (2) stressing family/marital successes, one (1) respondent was

actually acknowledging the support her family provided to her while she was pursuing career goals.

Question 3 - "In what light do you regard competition from Black males in your profession? Do you feel the same competition from white males? White females?

Eight (8) respondents felt they had been competitive with Black males, white males, and white females. Three (3) respondents did not feel such competitiveness.

Question 5 - "While you were preparing for your career and since, what important directions has education for Black women taken?"

All of the interviewees responded that Black women now have more opportunities than they did at the time the interviewees were preparing for their careers. Among the opportunities cited were the chance to enter into new fields--such as athletic administration and coaching--and the opportunity to pursue higher educational goals, such as obtaining doctoral and professional degrees.

Question 6 - "Does the institution you serve (for example, education or law) suppress or encourage your creativity and ambition?"

Four (4) respondents said they believed that their institution or field suppressed their creativity and ambition, three (3) respondents believed that creativity and ambition were encouraged by their institution or field, and three (3) respondents stated that creativity and ambition were both encouraged and suppressed by their institution or field.

One (1) respondent who felt that her institution suppressed creativity and ambition stated that "it suppresses creativity by limiting things they permit you to do. It may suggest you do all

kinds of things, but then doesn't let you do them. Decision-making people aren't well-informed."

One (1) woman who believed that creativity and ambition were encouraged at the same time voiced the opinion, however, that creativity was not rewarded. Those who held the view that creativity and ambition were both encouraged and suppressed explained away this apparent paradox by stating that while encouragement is often extended, time and support often are not.

Question 14 - "Do you feel a need for Black-oriented professional organizations?"

One (1) respondent felt that there was no need for Black-oriented professional organizations giving as her reason the belief that "... we should be together. In the south, there were some advantages. We were never in on policy-making, or national leadership. Black caucuses within established organizations are needed. I've been a product of segregated professional organizations. I never want to be a member of another one. We need a power base. I'm somewhat criticized for this feeling."

The majority of those responding to this question, seven (7) respondents, believed that there was a need for Black oriented professional organizations. Reasons cited for this belief are revealed in the following quotes.

> "Yes, for survival purposes, for networking. We need a support group. We are a drop in the bucket ... We must band forces en masse. Other institutions are bigger, richer, and have contacts..."

> "A mentor relationship is fostered in groups. It's easier to share ideas and overcome obstacles. We must get a group of people on the same level as ourselves."

3. Personal Lives (7, 13)

Question 7 - "How do you balance your career and family life?"

All respondents who were married and had children (7 of the interviewees) responded that balancing careers and family lives is difficult. One (1) respondent, a physician, reflected, "I don't know if I can say it's always balanced. Sometimes I do grocery shopping 7:30 at night. Emergencies come up and you never know when. My emergencies come before family."

Question 13 - "Give me an estimate of your image as a Black professional in the community as a whole."

Two (2) respondents stated that they did not know their image in the community, six (6) believed that they had good images, and two (2) stated that they were not visible in the community and, therefore, had no community image. Of the two (2) respondents who were unsure of their image, one (1) stated that she was involved in various activities and that people respected her, and the other stated that she was involved in social organizations and thought her image might not be as good as she would want it to be. Of those believing their image to be good, respondents explained that they were active in community affairs, were sought after, and were supported by the community.

4. Sociopolitical Views (Questions 8, 10, 15, 16, 17)

Question 8 - "How do you respond to the feminist movement and the Equal Rights Amendment?"

Six women favored the feminist movement while two (2) were opposed to the movement. Opposition was based on the fear that the movement would cause the social courtesies extended to women by men to cease. Some of those favoring the movement also

expressed the desire that the traditional social graces be maintained. Four (4) women expressed neither support for nor opposition to the feminist movement.

Nine (9) respondents were in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment, expressing a desire to secure equal rights which could be afforded them if this Amendment had been ratified. One (1) respondent stated that she had been subjected to discrimination because of her sex at her predominantly Black place of employment. However, they also anticipated the potential abuse which could result from this Amendment had it been ratified. No respondent said she opposed the Amendment.

Respondents expressed the concern that the feminist movement did not adequately address the racial discrimination that Black women face, causing one (1) respondent to offer support for the National Black Feminist Organization. One (1) respondent said she believed that the feminist movement unnecessarily divided Black males and females.

Question 10 - **"Do your responses to the feminist movement coincide with those of Black women generally?"**

Six (6) interviewees said they believed that their points of view regarding the feminist movement coincided with those of Black women generally. Five (5) women stated that they felt their responses generally differed from those of other Black women.

It should be noted that this appeared to be an extremely difficult question for the interviewees to answer.

Question 15 - **"Do you feel a special kinship with African women? If so, does that have any influence on your self-esteem and self-image?"**

Three (3) of the women interviewed said they felt a special kinship with African women, and also stated that this kinship influenced their self-esteem and self-image. Some of their responses to this question include the following:

> "Definitely. I've made two trips to Africa.... In Kenya, there exists a situation which is contrary to African women's being subservient and to the polygamy concept of family. We have remnants of the extended family here in the U.S. Appreciating Black pride there makes me proud. Few African women are educated, but I find them beautiful...."

> "Sure, I think it does help to know about your roots. I try to involve my kids about where they came from and who they are."

Seven (7) respondents stated that they do not feel a special kinship with African women. Their responses included the following:

> "Not necessarily. Africa is a whole continent, many countries, many cultural heritages. Having visited Africa, I feel a kinship, but I am westernized. I come from a different mold. I related on an individual basis rather than on a whole."

> "My father would be mistaken for a white man. I have no kinship with African women. I don't get my self-esteem from color or my race."

> "No, I personally do not know any person of true African descent. They've made tremendous progress. I've been told by Africans I need to find my heritage ....I appreciate my heritage."

Question 16 - "Assess the impact of the civil rights movement on your status, professionally and personally."

Of the eleven (11) interviewees who responded, all said they felt that the civil rights movement had affected their professional and personal status. Respondents expressed the opinion that the civil rights movement removed occupational and educational barriers and increased the pride and self-esteem of

Black people. The following comments describe some of the respondents' reactions.

> "I thought that the civil rights movement was one of the better things that happened to this country. I grew with the movement."
>
> "The civil rights movement was overdue. We're ready for a second civil rights movement. The kids aren't taught well, they have a lower self-esteem."

Question 17 - "What current trends in ethics and politics (for example, budget cutting) do you feel affected by?"

There were no consistent responses across respondents for this question. However, most of the respondents seemed to be critical and pessimistic about the current state of affairs as expressed in their observations of problems and attitudes. The following quotes are characteristic in tone of the various opinions offered in response to this question.

> "Changing ethics have guided the rule with young people, the way we see ourselves in the total society, the values of right and wrong. Problems on TV are really solved easily. We don't realize life is complex. Violence and sex look like they are the accepted mode. Politics play a crucial role when inflation is rampant. Budget cuts will affect Blacks more; research programs and aids to Black colleges will be cut. There will be a limited number of staff members and resources for proposal development. Politics is politics.".
>
> "Sometimes I feel that the whole society is corrupt. This is the "Age of Everything Goes." People forget public decency. There is a problem with teenage pregnancy. I see so many children having babies. They aren't ready for this--not concerned with making life better for your child. I think the goal of every parent should be to make things better for the child. The motto now is "Gratification Now." Politics is considered a bad word. It's almost like you're on a downhill slope and wonder if you'll make it back up. I'm not really pessimistic."

"I feel threatened as a person by the seeming disorganization of the home, family, and disregard for human life. I'm concerned about a lack of concern for humanity. Looks like the world is based on when Rome fell--disregard human feelings - materialistic. Politics are empty promises which are spoken by campaigning politicians who never live up to these promises."

Chapter IV

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

A. Discussion

The women interviewed in this study displayed a wide variety of views. Some questions appeared to be difficult to answer, thus reflecting, perhaps, difficulty in evaluating and categorizing their experiences. Following is a discussion of the respondents' answers organized around the four (4) areas explored. Again, the four (4) areas were as follows: (1) racism and sexism, (2) career growth and experiences, (3) personal/family concerns, and (4) sociopolitical views.

1. Racism and Sexism

There was a unanimous conclusion among the respondents that stereotypes prevailed for both Black men and Black women. In citing instances of the kinds of stereotypes which exist, it was found that the respondents seem to perceive that Black females were often victims of both sexual and racial stereotyping. For example, in giving examples of stereotypes which exist for Black females, the respondents included the following beliefs: that Black males perceive Black females as competition, that the care of the family and birth control are female responsibilities, that Black women are matriarchs, and that Black females are more stable than are Black males. Examples given of stereotypes about Black males included the Uncle Tom caricature, the lazy, and shiftless image and the "Super-Stud" image.

The responses confirm the double jeopardy hypothesis: Black women see themselves as facing stereotypes of race and sex from the larger society and from Black men. Differentiating between sex and race discrimination appeared to be a perplexing if not impossible and, perhaps, unnecessary task.

There were more differences of opinion in response to the other questions regarding racism and sexism. Of the twelve (12) women responding to the question asking them to compare the degree of ease of their road to career attainment to that of Black males, only two (2) women said they believed that they had an easier time in attaining success than did Black males. Three (3) viewed themselves as having experienced an equally difficult time, and seven (7) viewed their experiences as more difficult than those of Black men. Six (6) respondents said they believed that they had been held down by sexist attitudes. Four (4) did not. Five (5) women said they believed they had been treated as a sex object and four (4) did not. These findings add to the impression that sexism and racism have been major obstacles for these women and that, perhaps, less support had been offered them because of both racial and sexual discrimination. Even in the two (2) cases where the respondents said they believed that their career ascent had been easier than that of a Black man, one (1) of the reasons given by one (1) of the women to explain the ease of her career ascent was sexist and racist in tone--the woman was seen as less of a threat due to a stereotyped perception of the demure female.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when asked to assess the current status of Black women in their fields, only six (6) women perceived Black women as having high status. Five (5) respondents viewed Black women as having low or mediocre status.

2. Career Growth and Experiences

Of the five (5) questions asked concerning career experiences, one (1) elicited a unanimous opinion from the respondents. They all said they believed that Black women have more employment opportunities now than when the respondents began their career preparation, a belief which is particularly exemplified by their entry into new career fields and their pursuit of higher educational degrees. However, only three (3) respondents said they believed that their particular discipline or field encouraged the respondent's creativity and ambition. Four (4) women responded that they believed that their creativity and ambition had been suppressed by their profession, and three (3) said they believed that their creativity and ambition had been both encouraged and suppressed by their respective fields. It seems, then, that the respondents' perceptions of the greater career opportunities for Black women are not generally based on their personal experiences with those opportunities. While encouragement was believed to be lacking in their fields, most (9) of the respondents, nonetheless, stated that they had experienced significant job related success. Overcoming obstacles toward career advancement for these women seemed to be an act of individual effort rather than institutional or organizational support.

Competition with white males, white females, and Black males was perceived to have been experienced by eight (8) respondents. Seven (7) respondents said they felt that there was a need for Black professional organizations. One (1) respondent said she did not feel that such organizations were needed, thus suggesting in her response that they could not provide a power base. Four (4) respondents were not sure if Black organizations were needed. These women were for the most part optimistic that Black professional organizations could assist in furthering the career development of Black persons. Skepticism of the utility of such organizations was also apparent among the aforementioned women who were uncertain as to the worth of Black organizations in addition to the respondent who felt no necessity for the existence of these organizations.

3. Personal Lives

Two (2) questions were asked about the respondents' personal lives--one concerned their family life and the other pertained to the community. All respondents who were married and had children (7) reported that it was difficult to balance a career and family life. In response to the question asking them to give an estimate of their image as a Black professional in the community, only six (6) of the women interviewed said they believed they had a good image, two (2) stated that they were unsure of their image, and two (2) said they believed that they were not visible in the community and, therefore, they had no community image. (Two (2) participants did not respond to the question.) While one said she believed she had a bad or tarnished image in the community, it was expected by the author that more than half of the women would have

believed that they had a good community image. It is possible that modesty prevented more of them from proclaiming themselves as being favorably "known" in their community or, perhaps, some of the women may have felt that they had not contributed enough to the community to warrant a "good" community image. These women may have been placing extremely high expectations on themselves that they have not yet achieved.

4. Sociopolitical Views

Respondents were asked their opinion of the feminist movement and the civil rights movement. They were also asked if they felt any special kinship with African women. Just as theorists conflict in their positions regarding the Black woman's need to support or participate in the feminist movement (Lorde, 1978; Torrey, 1979, and Hood, 1978), these respondents were diverse in their views of the feminist movement and the Equal Rights Amendment. Although none of the respondents expressed opposition to the ERA, only nine (9) of the twelve (12) distinctly voiced support for it. However, only six (6) of the women said they favored the feminist movement. Two (2) were opposed to the movement and four (4) expressed neither support nor opposition. Six (6) women said they believed that their views of the feminist movement were like those of most Black women, and five (5) said they believed their views were different from those of most Black women. It is important to note that these questions seemed to be quite difficult for the respondents to answer--the responses confirming, to some extent, the general feelings of uncertainty prevalent in the literature when racism and sexism are discussed. Quite simply, no one is sure if allegiance to race or allegiance

to sex should prevail. Still others question whether such a choice (between race and sex) should be, has to be, or can be made. Another underlying anxiety seems to be the feeling that some loss of desired social traditions that are sexually based, for example, opening doors, and so forth, may be lost in the feminist battlefield. Notice that a clear majority of these respondents are in favor of the ERA (which seems primarily to be viewed by these respondents as a guarantee of equal pay for equal work document). The broad cause of feminism is not as well supported.

When asked to assess the impact of the civil rights movement on their professional and personal lives, eleven (11) respondents said they believed that the movement had positively affected them. They were pessimistic and negative about the ethics of current political activity. Moreover, they were critical not only of governmental institutions but also of individuals whom they perceive to be materialistic and overly concerned with self to the expense of others.

Few (3) respondents felt any special kinship with African women. Most viewed Black Africans as having separate backgrounds from Black Americans, and, consequently, separate histories on which to build esteem and heritage.

B. Implications for Future Research

As previously noted in this paper, care must be exerted in interpreting these findings due to the limitations inherent in this study. Since only twelve (12) Black women were interviewed in this research project, in order to make generalizations

concerning the attitudes of Black women in general, a much larger sample should be interviewed. However, the results from the present investigation are valuable in that trends among Black women professionals are very revealing. These results possibly suggest the probable attitudes of Black women professionals in general. Black women professionals studied in a larger sample would enable a comparison to be made with regard to such demographic variables as educational level, marital status, family background, number of children, and the existence or non-existence of support networks, as well as occupational levels.

The writer further maintains that, in future research, the attitudes and perceptions of both lower socioeconomic as well as working class Black women should be compared with those of Black women professionals. This contrast involving Black women of varying levels of socioeconomic status would be most enlightening.

In addition, Black women professionals who maintain traditional values pertaining to careers, marriage, and sex role concepts should also be compared with those espousing nontraditional views along these same lines. Similarly, Black women professionals in occupations different from those in this study should be researched.

In conclusion, in order to reduce the discrepancies inherent in the perceived roles of Black women professionals, future research must be directed toward studying and delineating these discrepancies so that coping strategies may be identified and techniques of social intervention may be devised and tested, as well as perfected.

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